United Nations A/58/413

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 October 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda items 12, 23, 37, 38, 39, 45, 47, 49, 50, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 86, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124 and 127

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Sport for peace and development

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development

Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session: implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

Information and communication technologies for development

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Questions relating to information

Macroeconomic policy questions

03-54717 (E) 101003

Sectoral policy questions: preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of funds of illicit origin and returning such assets to the countries of origin

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Environment and sustainable development

Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Operational activities for development

Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Globalization and interdependence

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Improving the financial situation of the United Nations

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Human resources management

Letter dated 1 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted on the occasion of the Twenty-seventh Annual Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 25 September 2003 (see annex).

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would highly appreciate it if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly under agenda items 12, 23, 37, 38, 39, 45, 47, 49, 50, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 86, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124 and 127.

(*Signed*) Mohamed **Bennouna**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco
to the United Nations
Chairman of the Group of 77

Annex to the letter dated 1 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China, guided by the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter and by the provisions of the Havana Declaration aad Plan of Action adopted by the South Summit, convened at the Twenty-seventh Annual Meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 25 September 2003, adopted the following declaration:

1. We welcome the admission of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste as a full member of the Group of 77.

2. We reaffirm our commitment to the Millennium Declaration and call upon the international community to fully and speedily implement the provisions set out therein and in other major United Nations conferences and summits.

3. We pledge to continue to work towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Group of 77 and China and, in this regard, underscore the historic importance of the Fortieth Anniversary of the establishment of the Group of 77 to be commemorated in June 2004.

4. We reaffirm our commitment to the strengthening of multilateralism and emphasize the need to work towards a key and decisive role of the United Nations in international economic policy-making and global and economic development issues and effectively contribute to the achievement of the development goals and objectives of developing countries in keeping with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

5. We welcome General Assembly resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, and call for its immediate and full implementation. We note with particular satisfaction that the General Assembly stressed the importance of regular review of the progress made in the implementation of the commitments undertaken in major United Nations Conferences and Summits, as well as of indicator for the assessment of the progress made in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goal number eight on Global Partnership for Development. We look forward to the holding of a major United Nations event in 2005 for a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration. We stress the importance of undertaking such a review in a balanced manner in terms of respective commitments of developing and developed countries.

Global Economic Situation

6. Globalization presents opportunities, challenges and risks for developing countries. The impact of globalization on development has been mixed and a large number of developing countries has not benefited from it. Economic disparities between developed and developing countries far from decreasing have increased. In this regard, we note with grave concern that the international economic environment continues to be unfavourable for the developing world.

7. We believe that for developing countries to benefit from globalization new approaches to international development cooperation are needed which place development at the heart of international relations and ensure full participation and integration of developing countries in the world economy. In this regard, we emphasize the need for an enabling international environment conducive to development, including through the reform of the

international financial architecture with a view to achieving greater transparency and increased participation of developing countries.

8. We reemphasize the need for a more favourable environment for economic growth of developing countries. Therefore, we further call upon the most advanced industrial countries to continue to take positive macro-economic measures to stimulate and ensure greater stability of the world economy. We call also for an effective coordination of macroeconomic policies among developed countries as essential to ensuring economic growth and the predictability of financial flows to developing countries, thus reducing their vulnerability to financial crisis and contagion.

Financing for Development

9. We note that developing countries continue to make strenuous efforts to mobilize domestic resources for development. Such efforts need to be supplemented by external resources, which should be provided without any condition, in order to effectively address their development requirements. We express our concern at the erosion of development cooperation and underline the need to reinvigorate it in order to address the new requirements of developing countries in the context of globalization and liberalization. In this context, we urge developed countries to take concrete steps to mobilize new and additional financial resources and facilitate greater flows of FDIs *to* developing countries, and in this regard implement their commitments undertaken in the outcomes of UN major conferences and summits.

10. We confirm the need to establish new innovative financial mechanisms to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustained economic growth, poverty eradication, sustainable development and strengthening their democratic systems, by raising new resources for productive investment and creating employment in order to provide answers to our people's legitimate needs while reaffirming the leading roles of national governments in the development process of each country.

11. We note with concern the trend of declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) in recent years, which reached a low of 0.22 per cent of GNP, representing less than one third of 0.7 UN target. We reiterate the urgent need for a substantial increase of ODA and strongly urge compliance with internationally agreed ODA targets and with commitments for new and additional resources.

12. We express regret that despite several initiatives undertaken over the past decade by the international community, the debt crisis persists as one of the main constraints for the development of developing countries. We reiterate the urgent need for the international community, particularly the developed donor countries and international financial institutions to adopt an effective, comprehensive and equitable solution to the problem of the debt crisis in time-bound fashion.

13. We welcome the high-level dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization held on 14 April 2003 by the ECOSOC as first step of the follow-up of Monterrey Consensus and look forward to the holding in October 2003 by the General Assembly of the High-level Dialogue on financing for development.

International Trade

14. We are disappointed that the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference at Cancun failed to produce an agreement that would have addressed the interests and concerns of developing countries. In Cancun, developing countries played a fundamental role in the negotiations. We reaffirm our commitment to display the same degree of unity of purpose and solidarity in further negotiations under the Doha WTO Round. We look forward to the continuation of the WTO process in which specific areas of interest for developing countries, such as improving market access for our products, special an differentiated treatment and the phasing out of agricultural subsidies, among others, remain at the core of multilateral trade negotiations.

15. We emphasize the importance of an open, rule-based multilateral trading system for the promotion of economic development, the facilitation of developing countries' integration into the global economy, and the eradication of poverty worldwide.

16. We are committed to pursuing the reform and strengthening of the multilateral trading system in a manner that promotes development. In this respect it is essential to place the development needs of developing countries at the heart of the WTO agenda. We stress the importance of enhanced and predictable access to developed country markets for products of export interest to all developing countries. We also express concern over the high incidence of anti-dumping measures and non-tariff barriers and reiterate that they should not be used for protectionist purposes. In this regard, we call for the full implementation of the Doha Ministerial Decisions as a necessary step in enhancing the Multilateral Trade System.

17. We emphasize the need to address expeditiously the implementation issues and concerns of developing countries as part of the Doha negotiation round. We further call for the strengthening of the special and differential provisions to make them more precise, effective and operational, so as to enable developing countries to effectively take account of their development needs, including food security. The special and differential treatment should be reviewed and strengthened to take account of the changing realities of world trade and globalized economy, and must be accompanied by capacity-building and enhanced market access. This should include, inter alia, assistance to help developing countries overcoming transitional costs and to allow time for achieving development goals and enhancing competitiveness.

18. We underline that the objective of the universality of the World Trade Organization should be pursued with great determination in order to strengthen the multilateral trading system and resist any attempt to undermine it. Further recalling the provisions of the Monterrey Consensus and Johannesburg Programme of Implementation, we emphasize the need to facilitate the accession of all developing countries that apply for the membership in WTO, including landlocked developing countries and taking into account the particularities of each country. We call also for an expeditious implementation of the Guidelines adopted by the General Council for the accession of the Least Developed Countries.

19. We commend the efforts of the Group in formulating a common position through the adoption on 22 August 2003 of the Group of 77 Declaration on the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, which has reflected the concerns and interests of developing countries towards ensuring a multilateral trading system that is responsive to the needs and concerns of developing countries.

20. We regret that despite continuously increasing prices paid by consumers, prices received by developing country commodity exporters have been declining steadily over the past several years. There is a need to redress this imbalance which, combined with other adverse conditions, including unfavourable market access or market entry conditions and competition from subsidized production in developed countries, places a heavy burden on developing commodity- exporting countries, pa.ticularly least developed countries. In this regard, while stressing the importance to empower commodity producers in developing countries to insure themselves against risk, we underscore the need for reforming the existing facilities to respond to the needs of commodity-dependant developing countries.

21. We stress our support to UNCTAD as the focal point within the United Nations for the integrated treatment of trade and development and the interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development, we welcome the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution 57/270B to include UNCTAD in the Monterrey Consensus follow-up mechanism. We commit ourselves to working together to make UNCTAD XI (Sao Paulo, Brazil, 14-18 June 2004) a successful global endeavour involving all actors and stakeholders in development. We are confident that UNCTAD-XI will afford the international community an opportunity to address the asymmetries and inequalities in the international marketplace, the structural limitations, inadequate supply capacities and vulnerabilities of developing countries to the external economic financial environment and help to put in place a development oriented multilateral trading system.

Sustainable Development

22. We reaffirm our commitment to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and stress the importance of economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development. To this end we urge developed countries and relevant major groups to fulfil their commitment to the full and expeditious implementation of the targets and goals set in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

23. We underscore the importance of the Commission on Sustainable Development as the high-level forum for sustainable development within the United Nations. We welcome the outcome of the Commission's eleventh session held from 28 April to 9 May 2003, in particular the new programme of work and organizational modalities. We underscore that the programme of work of the Commission should advance the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

24. We note the outcomes of the recently held meetings of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP-6). In this context, we emphasize the importance of providing adequate financial resources, capacity building, technology innovation and transfer to developing countries and cooperation with other relevant instruments particularly the biodiversity, desertification, and climate change conventions.

25. We note with grave concern that the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to constitute a global emergency, which undermines social and economic development throughout the world, particularly in developing countries. We emphasize the need to have an urgent, coordinated and sustained global response to address the epidemic through prevention, treatment and care. We strongly support the "Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS" adopted at the Twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, and call for its immediate implementation. We welcome the United Nations high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS in this regard. We reaffirm the right of developing countries to have access to affordable medicine, including anti-retroviral medicine, to combat the epidemic and, in this context, emphasize that international rules on intellectual property rights should not prevent developing countries from designing and implementing national public health policies to protect their populations. In this regard, we are encouraged by the decision reached recently on the issue of access to medicines by WTO members with insufficient or no manufacturing capacities in the pharmaceutical sector. We also welcome the efforts by the international community, including the recent G8 initiative in this regard and the Fifteenth International Conference on HIV/AIDS to be held in Thailand in 2004, to address effectively the urgency and gravity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

26. We stress vigorously the need to promote access to and transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries, including information and communication technology. We welcome the convening by United Nations of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in two stages: Geneva 2003 and Tunisia 2005. We regard this as a unique occasion for all the key actors of the international community to develop a common approach towards the use of information technologies for the benefit of development and to attain a better understanding of this technological revolution and its social, cultural and economic impact. The need to abridge the digital gap, for equitative access to information and expertise, for further involvement of our countries in a transparent and democratic management system of the global information network and the convenience of achieving consensus on ethical standards and principles instrumental in the development of a genuine information society, stand among the major challenges to be dealt with.

Social Development

27. We reiterate the crucial importance of achieving the internationally agreed goals of social development, in particular those identified in the World Summit for Social Development, including through an increased and untied assistance from the international community for this purpose. We believe that the international community bears the responsibility to

fulfil its commitments and implement the adopted decisions, in order to achieve the social development goals for the well being of the present and future generations.

The Programme of Action for the Least-developed Countries

28. We note with deep concern the weak implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 and call upon the international community to fully implement it. We urge the developed countries, bilateral and multilateral donors to honour their commitments in this regard in order to assist the Least-Developed countries in their development efforts. We also urge developed countries and international financial institutions to intensify support for national poverty reduction strategies.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

29. We commend the dedication of African leaders and people in the implementation of NEPAD, which aims to foster a genuine partnership for the development of Africa; we strongly support the ongoing efforts by the international community to assist Africa in the implementation of NEPAD, and call upon the United Nations System, civil society and private sector to contribute effectively to the implementation of NEPAD, including through South-South cooperation.

30. We welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSSA) with the responsibility to coordinate the United Nations support to Africa, guide reporting on Africa and coordinate global advocacy in support of NEPAD and call on the General Assembly to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to this office to allow it to fulfill its mandate.

The Barbados Programme of Action – Ten-year Review

31. We note with concern the unsatisfactory progress of implementation of the Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and call on the international community, especially the bilateral and multilateral donors to honour and renew their commitments to the Programme of Action and all efforts being undertaken by SIDS to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We also urge their full support and effective participation in the International Meeting hosted by the Government of Mauritius in 2004 to comprehensively review the Programme of Action for SIDS.

The Almaty Programme of Action

32. We welcome the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation held in Almaty from August 28-29, 2003. We express our strong support for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action aimed at a addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries and establishing a new global framework for action for developing efficient transit transport systems in landlocked and transit developing countries, taking into account the interests of both landlocked and transit developing countries. We stress the importance of enhanced and predictable access to developed country markets for landlocked developing countries in accordance with paragraph 33 of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Other major issues and developments

33. We reiterate the commitment of our countries to eradicate poverty and hunger, and raise the standard of living of our people, including through their right to food security. We recognize that poverty is a major cause of food insecurity and instability in developing countries. In this context, we call for decisive and concrete action by the

international community to assist developing countries in their efforts to reduce poverty globally during the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

34. We welcome the setting up in February 2003 of the World Solidarity Fund (WSF) as a trust fund of UNDP to contribute to the eradication of poverty and invite the UNDP Administrator to take further measures to operationalize the Fund by establishing on an urgent basis the high-level committee to define the strategy of the Fund and to mobilize the financial resources. In this regard, we stress the role of Governments, civil society and private sector in mobilizing resources for the World Solidarity Fund.

35. We welcome the fact that the Group of 77 in Vienna has developed a common position on issues of central significance to the negotiation of a Convention against Corruption and is actively involved in the negotiation process. We consider that those negotiations should lead to the elaboration of a convention, which is comprehensive, strong, and effective in providing for international cooperation in the struggle against corruption, including through adequate measures as regards mutual legal assistance, extradition, prevention, seizure and recovery of assets.

36. We firmly reject the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries, and reiterate the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. We emphasize that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. We, therefore, call on the international community neither to recognize these measures nor apply them.

37. We express our grave concern over the impact of economic sanctions on the civilian population and development capacity in targeted countries, and therefore urge the international community to exhaust all peaceful methods before resorting to sanctions, which should only be considered as a last resort. If necessary, these sanctions must be established only in strict conformity with the Charter of the United Nations with clear objectives, a clear time frame, provisions for regular review, precise conditions for their lifting and never be used as a form of punishment or otherwise to exact retribution. In this regard, we call upon all parties involved to make every responsible effort to fully implement the provisions of all relevant Security Council resolutions in order to reach the lifting of sanctions as soon as possible.

38. We welcome Security Council resolution 1506 of 12 September 2003 by which the sanctions imposed on Libya have been permanently lifted and commend the constructive efforts that Libya undertook in order to reach this positive result. We reiterate our demand for the lifting of all unilateral sanctions imposed against Libya as a means of political coercion in contravention to the UN resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 57/5 of 16 October 2002 and we support Libya's demand for compensations on human and material damages caused by these sanctions.

39. We call upon the international community to provide the necessary assistance to landmine clearance operations, as well as to the rehabilitation of the victims and their social and economic integration into the landmine affected countries. We express concern over the residues of the Second World War in particular in the form of landmines which cause human and material damage and obstruct development plans in some developing countries. We demand that the States responsible for laying the mines outside of their territories assume responsibility for the landmines, cooperate with the affected countries to get rid of them and to contribute defraying the cost of clearance and provide compensation for any ensuing losses and for reclaiming the affected areas for productive purposes. In this regard, we express support for the assistance in the demining efforts in the south of Lebanon and call on Israel to provide the United Nations with all the maps and information on the location of the landmines that it has planted in the south of Lebanon during its occupation which are hindering the development and rehabilitation of the south of Lebanon and preventing the agricultural exploitation of vast areas of rich agrarian land.

40. We welcome the proposal made by Tunisia to the 58th session of the General Assembly to adopt a resolution declaring an International year of Sports and Physical Education in the service of peace and development.

41. We welcome the decision taken by the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its sixth session in Havana, designating GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention and call upon the United Nations to declare 2004 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification with the view to raising awareness on the phenomenon of desertification and protecting biodiversity of deserts as well as indigenous and local communities and traditional knowledge of affected countries.

South-South Cooperation

42. We recognize the increased relevance of South-South cooperation in the current international economic climate. We, therefore, reiterate our support for South-South cooperation both as a strategy in support of the development efforts of the developing countries and as a means of enhancing participation of developing countries in the emerging global economy. We affirm the importance of strengthening South-South Cooperation in the UN System, including funds and programmes and specialized agencies involved in South-South cooperation and, in this regard, we support the strengthening of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and we call on the UNDP to provide the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation with necessary support to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

43. We welcome the offer made by the Kingdom of Morocco to host the High-level Conference on South-South cooperation in Marrakech from 16 to 19 December 2003 in accordance with the Havana Programme of Action and call developing countries to participate actively at ministerial level in order to ensure success of the Conference. We consider the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation an important landmark in our collective effort to increase the momentum and intensity of development cooperation. In this context, we welcome the regional preparatory meetings as well as the initiative of holding a forum of NGOs and private sector on the occasion of the Conference.

44. We welcome the initiative taken by the Asian-African Sub-regional Organizations Conference (AASROC) in Bandung, Indonesia, from 29-30 July 2003 to establish a New Strategic Partnership for promoting South-South cooperation through, inter alia, strengthening coordination among the secretariats of sub-regional organizations.

45. We endorse the outcome of the High-level Conference on Science and Technology held in Dubai from 27 to 30 October 2002 and emphasize the need to ensure an effective follow-up and implementation of the Dubai Declaration. In this context, we call on the High-level Advisory Group for the follow up of the Dubai Conference to meet as soon as possible and to submit to the Group a concrete plan of implementation with a time frame.

46. We reiterate our commitment to further the implementation of the South Summit outcome and commend the dedication of the G-77 Secretariat in implementing the programme of activities of 2003 as adopted by the Group of 77 on 9 April 2001, despite its limited resources. In this context, we urge the Member States to provide financial resources as decided by the South Summit and to contribute generously to the Special Fund established under section VI (paragraph 4) of the Havana Programme of Action in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the South Summit outcome.

47. We express our satisfaction for the results achieved so far by the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF) in promoting South-South cooperation projects and we strongly encourage developing and developed countries to pledge contributions to the PGTF on the occasion of the annual UN pledging conference to be held in New York in early November in accordance with the Group's decision.

48. We decide that the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in Marrakech, Morocco on 16th to 19th December 2003 will consider the progress in the implementation of outcomes of the South Summit as identified in the Havana Programme of Action pertaining to South-South cooperation, including the proposed G-77 Trade and Development Bank and the activities of G-77 Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

49. We approve the Financial Statement of the ECDC Account of the Group of 77 (G-77/AM(XV)/2003/5). We express concern over the precarious financial situation of the ECDC Account and the fact that since the Havana Summit only 37 countries have paid their contributions in full. In this context, we appeal to all member States of the Group of 77 to contribute generously to the ECDC Account as decided by the South Summit in order to support the implementation of the annual programme of work of the Group of 77 and to ensure continuity of the smooth functioning of the Office of the Chairman.

50. We approve the report of the First Special Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for ECDC/TCDC (PGTF) (G-77/AM(XV)/2003/2) and the Report of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for ECDC/TCDC (G-77/AM(XV)/2003/3), which were presented in accordance with the guidelines for the utilization of PGTF. We note with satisfaction the progress made so far by the PGTF in support of South-South cooperation projects and call upon all members of the Group of 77 as well as the United Nations system to support the expansion of resources of the Trust Fund. We commend the Chairman of the Committee of Experts for his continued commitment and leadership in the Fund's activities.

Situation in Palestine and the Middle East

51. We remain gravely concerned over the tragic and dangerous situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, which has resulted in the grave deterioration of the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people, and has negatively affected stability and development in the region as a whole. We call for the immediate and complete cessation and end to settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan and end to the recent Israeli occupation and siege of Palestinian cities, towns and villages, which are in violation of international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and all forms of collective punishment against the Palestinian people, as well as the return to the negotiation table. We also call for the immediate Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, and from all the other Arab occupied territories. We reaffirm our support to the Palestinian people in their effort to achieve their inalienable rights, including their right to establish an independent state on their national soil, including Jerusalem.

52. We reaffirm our support for the Middle East peace process started in Madrid in 1991, and aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace. In this context, we support the peace initiative adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in March 2002.

53. We call for the full implementation of the Roadmap Peace Plan for the Israeli-Palestinian track by the concerned parties.

54. We support the inalienable rights of Lebanon to utilize its waters in accordance with international law and in particular to ensure the social and economic needs of its population in the liberated areas and villages. We also call on Israel to end its air violations of Lebanese sovereignty and other violations that severely damage the security situation which is a critical factor in promoting the tourism industry and the economy.

Strengthening of the United Nations

55. We believe that the strengthening of the United Nations and its role in international cooperation for development is essential to respond to current and future challenges and opportunities emanating from the process of globalization. We are of the view that the United Nations needs to improve its capabilities and capacities. In this regard, we welcome the efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the centrality of the United Nations in international affairs, and support a constructive debate among all Member States on the reform of the United Nations.

56. We reaffirm the legal obligation of all member states to bear the financial expenses of the UN, in accordance with the Charter, and urge all member states to pay assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions. We further recognize the need to extend sympathetic understanding to those Member States that temporarily may not be able to meet their financial obligations as a consequence of genuine economic difficulties.

57. We reiterate the importance of the forthcoming negotiations of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 and stress that the resources to be approved by the General Assembly should be commensurate with the mandated programmes and activities including those in the economic, social and developmental areas, and ensure their full and effective implementation.

58. We also stress that during budget negotiations, there should be an examination of those services to Member States that were seriously affected as a result of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/254, in order to restore those services deemed necessary by the Group.

59. We also reiterate the importance of the forthcoming negotiations on the scale of assessments for the triennium 2004-2006, and their swift conclusion, while reaffirming the principle of "capacity to pay" as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations.

60. We emphasize the need to increase the number of staff at decision making levels for certain regions and recruitment from underrepresented and unrepresented member states and call upon the Secretary-General to work towards achieving equitable geographic representation.

61. We express concern at the inadequate share of the developing countries in the United Nations system of procurement. We emphasize that the United Nations procurement should be on as wide a geographical basis as possible with preferential treatment for the developing countries. We further underline that the United Nations supplier roster should be representative of the membership of the Organization.